

# 2002 Wetlands Reserve Program

## Program Focus —

The Wetland Reserve Program's (WRP) primary focus is the hydrologic and vegetative restoration of drained, altered and degraded wetlands. Much of the historic wetland losses in Virginia have been associated with agricultural conversion of wetlands to cropland. The WRP is reversing this trend in the agricultural community.

This past year, two tracts were restored in the watershed of the Holston River. One wet pasture and one drained crop field were restored to a functioning wetland. Waterfowl and other wildlife are utilizing the wetland. The many threatened and endangered species of freshwater mussels found in the Holston River will benefit from the improved water quality.

## Virginia Summary

### Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands. The goal of the program is to restore wetlands to “natural” conditions, including both hydrologic and vegetative restoration. In eastern Virginia, the majority of the wetlands are planned to be groundwater dependent hardwood forested wetlands. In the mountain region, spring seep and herbaceous/shrub wetlands are usually planned. NRCS works with many partners in the restoration efforts. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Forestry, Ducks Unlimited, and The Nature Conservancy have all contributed material and/or services to the WRP.

### Accomplishments

Virginia has enrolled a total of 31 contracts on 1,172 acres. This past year, two tracts were enrolled totaling 72 acres. Both tracts were enrolled in the program under the permanent easement option. In addition, the hydrologic and vegetative restoration work was completed on 194 acres of previously enrolled properties. Some WRP sites are being utilized for education and research, and three have associated threatened and endangered species benefits.

### Program Benefits

Restoring the function and values of wetlands has many positive environmental effects, especially when an adequate buffer or riparian area is included in the easement area. In addition to environmental benefits, social benefits may include aesthetics, recreation, and income from utilizing native plants. Restoration of the native plant communities provides very high quality habitat for aquatic species and wetland dependent species of wildlife.

**State contact:** John Myers, Environmental Specialist, USDA/NRCS  
1606 Santa Rosa Rd., Richmond VA 23229 Phone: 804-287-1668



## Virginia Dollars and Contracts

| Congressional<br>Districts | Fiscal Year 2002  |                        | Cumulative Total (95-02) |                        |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
|                            | Obligated Dollars | Number of<br>Contracts | Obligated Dollars        | Number of<br>Contracts |
| District 1                 | \$0               | 0                      | \$518,735                | 12                     |
| District 4                 | \$50,000          | 1                      | \$531,914                | 3                      |
| District 5                 | 0                 | 0                      | \$208,833                | 70                     |
| District 6                 | 0                 | 0                      | \$7,522                  | 0                      |
| District 8                 | \$0               | 0                      | \$10,043                 | 7                      |
| District 9                 | \$100,000         | 1                      | \$130,227                | 4                      |
| District 10                | \$0               | 0                      | \$40,000                 | 1                      |
| <b>State Totals</b>        | <b>\$150,000</b>  | <b>2</b>               | <b>\$1,447,274</b>       | <b>27</b>              |

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